

MINUTES FOR January 5, 2012
MEETING FOR THE PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

Member Present: Erwin Mack, Chair; David Anspacher; Ramin Assa, Captain Thomas Didone; Darrel Drobnich; Jeff Dunkel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator; Steve Friedman, Angel Garcia-Ablanque, MCPS; Alan Migdall; Colleen Mitchell, Peter Moe; Alyce Ortuzar; Richard Romer (representing Councilmember Valerie Ervin); Al Roshdieh, Deputy Director MCDOT (representing Director, Arthur Holmes, Jr.); Jack Strausman

Members Absent: John Britton, Municipal League; Valerie Ervin, Councilmember; Reemberto Rodriguez, Director, SS RSC; David Sharp

County Staff: Joana Conklin, MCDOT; Bill Selby, MCDOT; Will Haynes, MCDOT; Susanne Churchill, DGS; Gary Erenrich, MCDOT; Gail Tait-Nouri, MCDOT; Rob Klein, DGS; Linsey Hawksford, MCDOT

Guests: Charles Hynson; John Wetmore; Peggy Schwartz; Edna Miller; Casey Anderson; Daniel Morales; John Morrison; Peter Gray; Tom Robertson; John Telesco; Jeremy Martin; Richard Reis; Robert Dennis; Peggy Dennis

Chairman, Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

This meeting began with item # 2 on the agenda: Automated Enforcement on School Buses

Richard Romer discussed Bill 37-11, Motor Vehicles and Traffic – School Bus Safety Cameras, which Councilmember Ervin introduced in November 2011. This bill would allow automated enforcement on school buses which will take photographs of violators. The council is looking for PBTSAC's support.

The Maryland State Department of Education authorized local law enforcement agencies to implement the program; however they are not mandated to do so.

Captain Didone says MCPD supports this bill, as it is one of the most serious top five traffic violations. MCPD is preparing a Fiscal Impact Statement to present to Council. Currently, enforcement of violators is difficult, as there are more bus routes than officers available. Monies collected (maximum \$250.00 fine) will be used to recoup the costs of the program and public safety initiatives. If any violation is contested, the funding will go to the District Court. Current data suggests that this program may not generate net revenues for any local jurisdiction; however improving the safety of the children is the primary objective of the legislation.

Ramin Assa is concerned about the small percent of violations compared to the number of bus routes and stop. He suggests, along with Alyce Ortuzar, that we spend the cost of the camera on education and engineering, including lighting on the buses. Alan Migdall agrees that some money should be spent on education and engineering. **Do we have adequate information to make a recommendation to the Council at the moment? Are the cameras reliable?**

Cpt. Didone responded to Ramin Assa's concerns: Only a hand-full of vendors utilize the camera systems that work on school buses. Demonstrations show that the systems are reliable and accurate. He is very confident the systems will work; however this will be a "slow-grow" program so the County can better afford it. Over the long-term the program will be self-sustaining.

Angel Garcia-Ablanque, MCPS, explained the process for activating the "STOP" bars and lights on school buses. He says that even then drivers say they don't see the stopped buses. State legislators say that we should be proactive in the efforts to keep the children safe, and not wait for a tragedy to occur.

Ramin Assa believes that prevention is the key; why aren't they seeing more effort on prevention? Cameras won't help drivers see the buses better. **What is a more effective way of preventing violations instead of taking a picture after the violation occurs?**

MCPD believes that once people are aware of the program and educated about what a violation is and that cameras are on the buses, then the compliance rate will increase; therefore decreasing the violation rate.

Other members are concerned that we don't know the entire scope of the problem, and that more investigating into the issue should be done.

A public hearing will be held on January 24, 2012, at 1:30 p.m.

MOTION: The PBTSAC supports Bill 37-11, to authorize the installation of school bus safety cameras and that the program should include a strong education component and citizen involvement through a citizens' advisory committee, similar to the advisory committee used for implementing the County's speed camera program. The motion passed with 10 in favor, 3 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The following minutes reflect the return to the prepared agenda.

1. Committee Business:

The minutes from the November meeting were introduced.

Action: The committee moved to approve the November 2011, minutes; approved unanimously.

Chairman Erwin Mack informed members of his new email address: eandsmack@aol.com

County Executive Approval of Bill 27-11: Committee has been reauthorized with no sunset provisions. Council wants it formally acknowledged that bicycles are part of PBTSAC's mission. Also, the committee is to designate a member to represent the disabled community.

MOTION: Steve Friedman made a motion to acknowledge and thank the County Council for making changes to the structure of the committee.

Follow-up from November Meeting (Jeff Dunckel):

- **Silver Spring Library Pedestrian Safety Impact Study:** Provided a copy of the impact study that was presented during the November, 2011, meeting with SSCAB.
- **East Silver Spring Sidewalks:** A copy of the sidewalk survey map Dan Morales prepared, that was presented during the November meeting was provided to the committee.

Pedestrian Collisions and Fatalities in 2011 (Cpt. Thomas Didone): Preliminary MCPD data shows that both collisions and fatalities are down from 2010's levels. Per Alyce Ortuzar's request, a summary of the 11 fatal pedestrian crashes was provided to the committee; preliminary assessments showed that 9 out of the 11 crashes were the fault of the pedestrian. Alan Migdall would like to see details from the accident reports that relate to the design of the infrastructure - - nearest crosswalk, street lighting conditions, pedestrian signals functioning, etc, - - to see if any of these factors could have played a role in the crashes. Cpt. Didone will work with Will Haynes on reviewing the engineering and lighting of roadways where fatalities have occurred.

A summary of bicycle crashes was provided, as well. Bicycle collisions did go up; however there were no fatalities. Pedestrian and bicycle analysis reports should be done by the end of February. Steve Friedman requested detail of the infrastructure where bicycle collisions occurred. Peter Moe informed the committee that SHA will introduce an automatic database so State data is more accurate.

FY13 Budgets (Al Roshdieh): MCDOT submitted their recommended budget (CIP and Operating) to OMB. It included a reduction in the CIP budget and a two percent reduction in the operating budget. County Executive will announce the CIP budget on January 15, 2012, and the operating recommendations will be submitted to Council mid-March. No reductions were made in the area where the safety of the public will be impacted.

Update on Ride Along Follow-Up (Steve Friedman): Was successful and had a good showing of participants (30). A number of issues that require further discussions, investigation and possibly action were discovered along the way and discussed during the debriefing. There may be an interest in having the Ride Along as an annual event.

Jeff Dunckel informed the committee that the interviews for the new members will be held on January 12, 2012. John Britton is no longer a Rockville City Councilman, and can no longer serve as the Municipal League representative; the Municipal League may be nominating John Hall of Rockville to replace him.

2. Montgomery County Bike Share (Gary Erenrich):

Update and Report on Grant Applications: Montgomery County was awarded the JARC Grant through the Transportation Planning Board (Federal funds). This allows the County to implement the program in the Shady Grove – Rockville area, serving lower to moderate income residents; MCDOT is in the process of executing agreements with the Council of Governments. After applying for the three TIGER Grants, we received almost \$60 million for the TIGER 1 Grant (as part of the ARRA); therefore we didn't receive any money for the TIGER 2 Grant. The TIGER 3 Grant application was submitted to MDOT before December 25, 2011 (see County's press release). Concerns with the program are that people under the age of 16 will not qualify due to helmet laws and the operating costs are high. FTA fully supports the program. Committee members were interested in what the operating cost consist of and the need to train bicyclists on the rules of the road. County Council and WMATA fully support the program, as well.

Steve Friedman introduced guests in attendance (see attendance list on page 1.)

3. Bicycle Crash Data (Cpt. Thomas Didone):

Status of Current Crash Data on Bicycles: Discussed earlier in the meeting. Steve did mention some concerns about the misunderstanding and misapplication of laws by officers when citing bicyclists. Peter Moe informed the committee that MDOT is in the process of producing a law-enforcement training video on bicycle laws. Steve Friedman was concerned about how cyclists can protect themselves from drivers. Cpt. Didone said that it will be a slow process, starting with the data collected. Another concern is that bicycle crashes are due to road conditions; which can be reported to MC311. Establishing a tracking system to include location, road conditions, engineering, etc. will help in protecting/educating cyclists.

ACTION: Two suggestions were made: 1) expanding the SRTS program incorporating bicycle education; 2) MVA should conduct some sort of continuing driver education every 10 years.

4. Bicycles Facilities – Planned and Under Design/Construction (David Anspacher & Gail Tait-Nouri):

Master Planning for Bicycle Facilities: David Anspacher made a presentation on the bicycle facility planning and implementation process. There are three main types of bikeways in the master plans: shared-use path, bike lanes, and signed shared roadway. Another option may be cycle track. Must go through the development review process; storage, location, etc. Members expressed concern about the lack of a shared-use path along the ICC. MNCPPC is in the process of trying to get the State to allow bicycle use along the shoulder of certain segments of the ICC.

ACTION: Request to get the school system's input when locating bike lanes near a school. Angel Garcia-Ablanque expressed concern about Tilden Holding School and Tilden Lane.

MCDOT Bike Programs and MCBAG: Gail Tait-Nouri provided the committee with maps of the off-road bikeways and the current bicycle laws. Bicycles are classified as a vehicle; therefore have to abide by the same rules as cars on any road with a speed limit less than 50 MPH. There are Approximately 123 miles of bike paths in Montgomery County; not including park trails. Also, there are about 75 miles of shoulders/bike lane. MCBAG is striving to improve the connectivity of the bikeways.

Chairman Erwin Mack, due to time constraints, decided to defer the remainder of the agenda until the meeting in March 2012. Steve Friedman agreed to conclude the bicycle discussion and make any actions/recommendations at the March 2012 meeting.

Erwin Mack would like the May 2012 meeting to focus on issues for persons with disabilities.

Sidewalks Follow-Up – Pedestrian Network Assessment (Jeff Dunckel): As a follow-up to the November, 2012, meeting, Jeff Dunckel has met with Rick Earp, DTE, and residents to survey sidewalks in East Silver Spring. They are in the process of preparing a scope to be included in the FY13 operating budget request. Montgomery Hills and East Bethesda may be included in the scope as well.

Next Meeting will be held March 1, 2012.

- A presentation of the Piney Branch curb-marking program will be made during the March meeting (by Joana Conklin, contractor to MCDOT).

Adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

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